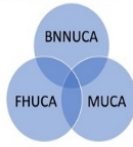




**Whitehorse
Uniting
Cluster**

The Uniting Church in Australia
Congregations of: Blackburn
North / Nunawading; Forest Hill;
and Mountview (Mitcham);
in a shared ministry together



Cluster News March 2022

Welcome to the March Cluster News.

Our hope is that this monthly bulletin will assist us all to feel informed and connected.

We would love to hear from you with contributions, reports and photos and with news of upcoming events.

It seems incredible that already another month has passed – soon we will have back the hour of sleep we lost last year!

Our welcome to Daniel Farnsworth, a ministry student undertaking a placement with us, at our combined service at Mountview was an excellent start. Good wishes as you move and work among us, Daniel (while continuing your studies – it will be a busy time for you). We look forward to our time together. Meanwhile, we will start to get to know Daniel through his biography in this News.

This month, development of the Cluster has continued with the Survey giving all members of all congregations the opportunity to express not only their thoughts but also their feelings and hopes on the path we have started to take. Sincere thanks to all those who took the time and thought needed to respond. Wasn't it interesting to do a pen and paper (or online) exercise with no right or wrong answer? It won't come back to you with red pen marks – or, unfortunately, gold stars for excellent work. But it will be a very useful guide for Regional Council as we work toward becoming closer into the future. Presently Phil McCredden of Ecclesia is working on analysis. So be prepared for some extra time to learn of his findings and

the implications as we move forward together. We have no details of this at present.

Another feature of the month has been the beginning of Lenten Studies, led by our Ministry Team, shared across the Cluster. Hospitality was watched on film, then this theme practised during discussion over shared food. Full details from Rev Tina are in this newsletter, especially for those who may now be able to join in.

Next month will bring Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter Day. Wherever you worship at this time, may it bring special blessing to your life, and bring enabling power as we move forward.

Introducing Daniel Farnsworth, in placement with the Cluster Ministry Team



My journey towards formation for ministry · has definitely had its ups and downs! Here's · an introduction – and if you catch me at any of the congregations, I would love to share more about any part of my story and even hear some of your stories as well...

I was born and raised in Ferntree Gully, into a Uniting Church family. My background is actually a little more complicated: my father's family had been Methodist before union, whereas my mother's family was the result of a Catholic-Anglican mixed marriage, at a time when that caused considerable scandal. The religious divide nearly tore that side of my family apart. My grandfather had even been in the Dominican novitiate once – he said that he failed to become a brother only because he couldn't stand their spaghetti. I like to think that if not for the poor cooking of the Dominican order, I wouldn't exist. However, the strife left my mother's side of the family rather jaded about religion, so I was brought to church by my father.

Like many of my generation, I grew more skeptical around church in my teens. Christianity seemed a bit drab and boring, and I felt it made it hard to be myself. I attended an Anglican private school, but it wasn't until university that I came back to faith. I went on to major in classics and philosophy at the University of Melbourne, and I think that learning history and taking the long view helped me to understand better what church really meant. Most of my social circle at the time was atheistic, but a few exceptions walked with me on a journey back towards the church, as I realised that it was part of who I was. A key part of my conversion – or reconversion – experience was realising that secular philosophy, as clever and insightful and useful as it was, had its limits, and I couldn't think my way intellectually to the meaning of life. At some point there is no other option but to make a decision, and mine was to have faith. After graduating I worked a range of jobs while trying to figure out where my life was taking

me, even as I became more involved with Ferntree Gully Uniting Church. I found I had something of a passion for organising and even leading worship, and this led me into a Period of Discernment, starting in 2013. My PoD proved to be a bumpy road. The first mentor I was assigned, Bob Brown, tragically passed away in 2013; and my journey with my second, Lucas Taylor, had a few difficulties. At the time I found it pretty difficult to talk openly or honestly about faith, even as I pursued a postgraduate degree in theology. Even so, I felt that I was able to grow and be challenged significantly over that period. When the presbytery recommended me to the selection conference for ministry in 2016, both they and I could see how far I'd come since 2013. I was not successful in 2016. The conference considered where I was, and recommended I come back in a few years and try again, after seeking out new life experiences. I travelled to Scotland in 2017, and for several months served as a volunteer in the abbey church on Iona. Iona is a small island with a medieval monastery that now serves as home to the Iona Community, a Christian group who produce resources for worship and for justice work that have spread around the world. Many of their resources are used in the Uniting Church today.

The experience of living in community there was very powerful and special to me. It was a place of quiet reflection and searching in community, as well as a place deeply connected to the past, all of which resonated strongly with me. With that experience – and some more adventures back in Australia – under my belt, I returned to the selection conference in 2018. This time they agreed to send me on into formation!

I hoped that things would settle down and formation would be straightforward, but it hasn't been like that at all. My first year in 2019 was much as I expected it, but by 2020 the world was thrown into a pandemic and suddenly we were all locked down at home,

unable to meet in person. Everything was suddenly topsy-turvy, and for the last years, I felt pretty overwhelmed by the challenges. Much of what I had hoped to do, I was not able to – and much of what I actually did do, I had not expected. My placements, at Burwood Heights and Highfield Rd Uniting Churches, all had their share of twists and turns, as did a pastoral education unit I did at Epworth Richmond.

Perhaps there was a lesson there as well: that every new year in ministry is full of its own surprises and challenges. Indeed, when I look back, every new stage in my journey has had surprises, confusions, but also encouragements that I didn't expect. How to live with surprises and work in the confusion is one of the most important lessons I've been trying to learn.

At every stage of my life so far there has been something new to learn and to challenge me, and this current stage is no different. For this year, we finally seem to be free of lockdowns and are relearning how to be a gathered community – and I hope to learn from that process as well. Ministry isn't just about ideas or liturgies, which can be transmitted easily over Zoom, but is about community and relationship, and those are all about presence. Perhaps that will be the next thing to explore on my path. But if the past is anything to go by, I'm sure I will be surprised again. Let's find the surprises that are in store together!

Lenten Study 2022 - from Rev Tina.

The inspiring movies are followed by discussion and BYO snack or meal.

Forest Hill

Sunday 27th March at 3pm – Molaki

Sunday 3rd April at 4pm – Les Misérables

Blackburn North Nunawading

30th March at 10am – Molaki -

6th April at 10am – Les Misérables –

Following the movie on 27th and 30th March, opportunity will be given for a retiring offering to support The Leprosy Mission.

Unexpected Hospitality

Recently, while travelling with friends, we stopped for a travel break at Naracoorte in South Australia. After purchasing our lunch, we looked for a table or seat in the park. The tables were occupied, and a seat provided a pleasant view of the park and the people. A group of men was busily setting up more tables and bringing large pots and platters of food from nearby cars. A little distance away a group of women and children were seated on a large rug and some young boys were kicking a soccer ball. Plates of food were being delivered to the women by the men. We were wondering what the cultural background of this group was. A chat with one of the men confirmed that they were Hazara and further that they were celebrating the Persian New Year. One of the men invited us to share the food. Conversation with the women resulted in an offering to share their Bolanis. They looked and smelled delicious but unfortunately, I had just eaten a large panini (very similar but different cuisine). I didn't like refusing this generous offer but explained how full my stomach was. The willingness to chat and invite strangers to share food impressed me as a wonderful example of hospitality. NB Further investigation has found that one of the largest migrant groups in Naracoorte is the Afghan Hazaras who make up over 2% of the population of the town.

Julie Hawkey

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2022

Our congregation was well represented when we gathered with people of other denominations at St John's Catholic Church, Mitcham on 4th March. A plentiful morning tea preceded the service which had been prepared by Christian women of England, Wales and Northern Ireland – countries where many churches have been invigorated by recent immigration. After a well-presented video, we heard three true stories of hope on the theme, "I know

the plans I have for you” (Jeremiah 29). The local priest, Father Dispin John was our speaker. While no particular hymns were listed, music was provided by two young women on piano and guitar.

Yes, the world keeps changing, even on Day of Prayer!

In keeping with the motto “Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action”, prayers were offered for the peoples’ needs and offerings were given to the Bible Society program “Bibles for Bubs”.

Next years’ service is written by the women of Taiwan on the theme, “I have heard about your faith” (Ephesians 1). Our local service will be held at Mountview on the first Friday in March 2023.

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Induction Service of the Rev Greg Wong,

as Priest in Charge at All Saints Anglican Church Mitcham, was led by The Right Reverend Dr Paul Barker, Assistant Bishop (Jumbunna Episcopate) in the Diocese of Melbourne.

John Baker, of BNNUC attended this service and writes: *I was very fortunate to be invited to the wonderful occasion. The church was packed for the service, which commenced with a large number of Anglican priests led by The Right Reverend Dr Paul Barker, followed by ministers of other denominations, to take their positions around the altar. It was a wonderful sight. All attendees were welcomed. The Right Reverend Dr Paul Barker presented a message which was especially relevant today, followed by the Induction Service which included lovely appropriate hymns. This concluded with the introduction of Greg, his wife Aileen and children Zachariah and Adele to the whole congregation, which was met with loud applause.*

At the conclusion of the service, a lovely supper was available to all.

We of the Whitehorse Cluster wish Greg and his family all the best as they settle in to carry out the Lord’s work at All Saints, Mitcham.

Introducing George Manuofetoa, BNNUC Representative on Regional Council.

My name is George Manuofetoa. I was born and raised in Christchurch, New Zealand. I originally grew up in the Tongan Methodist Church in Christchurch where I spent all my childhood and teenage years, leading into my young adult life. Being Tongan, going to church was a must (Sundays was always and only for church, so there was no rugby played that was allowed), and as a child it became a chore, but then as I got older and smarter, I started to learn more about Jesus, become more involved in the church, which led me to become a Youth Leader for the New Zealand Tongan Methodist church.

What happened next? In 2009 I had an offer to come to play Rugby in Australia which was a steppingstone to becoming a fulltime professional Rugby Player. I had come down to Melbourne on a weekend that I had free, to see my aunty at the Canterbury Uniting Tongan church; which is where I met my wife Finau. You can say life had changed for me and I saw more to life than rugby, so after 3 years we married at the church where we first met, and now 9 years later we have 4 loud, crazy, beautiful kids, Chris (8), Liekina (6), Grace (4) and Siasosi (2).

How did we end up at Blackburn North/ Nunawading Uniting Church? Well Finau’s father is Rev Lauleti Tuinauvai, and he was called to minister at BNNUC in 2015. At the time we were living in Cranbourne North, so naturally we followed him, mainly for babysitting duties (which both he and Manusiu still do to this day – but from Ballarat).

Now we see life settled for us in the Blackburn community, and BNNUC is the church where 3 of our 4 kids have been baptised and all 4 are growing up in. We love the congregation and the support we receive from the fellow members for our young family as well as the lessons both Finau and myself learn from the members.

I look forward to continuing to grow and worship within this Cluster and get to know more of the fellow members.



Plan of Services March to June

Date	Blackburn North Nunawading	Forest Hill	Mountview
March 27 Lent 4	Pete	Tina	Daniel Farnsworth
April 3 Lent 5 Combined (C) 10 am	Combined	Closed	Closed
April 10 Palm Sunday	Peter C	Pete	Tina
April 14 Maundy Thursday (C) 7pm	Tina	Closed	Closed
April 15 Good Friday 10am	Closed	Closed	Pete
April 17 Easter Sunday (C)	Peter C	Pete	Tina
April 24	Peter C	Pete	Tina
1 May Combined (C) 10am	Closed	Combined	Closed
8 May	Tina	Peter C	Pete
15 May (C)	Tina	Peter C	Pete
22 May	Tina	Peter C	Pete
29 May	Tina	Peter C	Pete
5 June Pentecost Combined (c) 10am	Closed	Closed	Combined
12 June	Pete	Tina	Peter C
19 June (c)	Pete	Tina	Peter C
26 June	Pete	Tina	Peter C

Regional Council Members

Blackburn North/Nunawading Uniting

Elaine Hewson 0425 709 089

Anne Smith 9899 1932

George Manuofetoa 0404 884 140

Forest Hill Uniting

Daryl Hawkey (Chairperson) 0419 607 085

Julie Hawkey 0488 460 875

Joy Williams 0402 491 013

Mountview Uniting Mitcham

Rob Jackson. 0413 599 047

Lynne Rosenthal. 0415 286 855

David Rowe 0411 268 680

Ministry Team

Rev Peter Cannon

Rev Tina Lyndon Ng

Rev Pete Rivett

Ministers On Call contact 0403 225 257